AN

ANSWER

TO THE

Rector of Bury's LETTER

TO HIS

FRIEND.

Wherein is ſhew'd,

That He has effectually, tho' unwillingly acquitted the *Diſſenters* from his malicious Charge of their being Corrupters of the Word of God.

That his attempts againſt the Titles of the *Pſalms*, and *Hebrew* Bibles are Feeble and Inconſiſtent.

By *JAMES OWEN.*

Malunt neſcire, quia jam oderunt. Tert. Apol. Cap. 1.

Hi rumores turpiſſimos ſerunt, & quod ab ipſis egreſſum eſt, id ab aliis audiſſe ſe ſimulant, iidem auctores & exaggeratores. Hieron ad Furiam.

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JUlius Cæsar reports of the Ancient *Gallic* Soldiers *, that *at the first on-set they were more than Men, and at the second less than Women.* Such a Champion is the *Rector of Bury*, who has *charged* the Dissenters with a Passion exceeding that of a *Man*, even such as distinguishes the *Accuser of the Brethren*, but finding himself warmly receiv'd, he consults his own Safety by an *inglorious flight*, and would shelter himself in such Refuges, as would be generously disdain'd even by those of the *weaker Sex*, whose Conduct is influenc'd by any Principles of Vertue and Honour: He is so vain as to compare himself to *Scipio Africanus* †, *whose Policy* (says he) *I thought fit to make use of by carrying the War into the Enemies own Country, and to lay to the Dissenter's Charge a Crime*, &c. Our renowned *English Scipio* is so fond of his *Military Politicks* that he cannot forbear mentioning them again in his Letter. *I thought not improper* ||, says he, *to carry the War into the Enemies own Countrey, and tax them with corrupting*, Acts 6. 3.

Here is a formidable War begun upon us, the Rector declares us all Enemies, because the *Note-maker* and Mr. *Calvin*, as he pretends, had broken the Peace, and treats us with all the fierceness and malignity, which he reckons due to *Enemies*, especially in a time of *Publick Hostility.*

* *De Bell. Gall.* † *Rem. on Rem.* p. 7. || *Letter*, p. 19.

One or two Persons had displeased him, and instead of engaging them, like another *Goliah* he assaults the whole Body of *English Dissenters*, together with the *Church of* Scotland. He lays to their *charge things they knew not*, and makes them Corrupters of the Word of God. He pretends they Printed *Ye* for *We* in *Acts* 6. 3. And this he attempts to prove by Four Arguments.

1. The first Corruption happen'd in *Cambridge* in the Year 1638. 2. It favours the *Dissenters*. 3. The Episcopal Party design'd not to corrupt this Place. 4. A *Cameronian* urg'd this corrupt Reading. These are the Forces, with which he manages the *War*, as he calls it. I fully confuted his Arguments in my *Remarks* on his *Corruption-Sermon*. Sometime after he Publishes his *Remarks on Remarks*, wherein he pretends to *confirm his Charge*, and to recruit his Forces by the Addition of a Story or two, which he tacks to the *Cameronian*-Story. That Book is full of bitter and indecent Reflections on the whole Tribe of Dissenters. In my further Vindication of the Dissenters, I answered all his Four Arguments, expos'd the weakness and invalidity of 'em, which must of necessity affect the Author, and now and then I complain'd of his *Injustice*, want of *Candor*, *Charity* and *Truth*. The Rector, as I have Reason to believe, being Convicted of the wrong he had done us, and not being able to vindicate his Arguments any longer, Publishes a sort of *Letter* to *a feigned Friend* (for *real ones* he has none in this Controversie) wherein he offers not the least Thing in Defence of his Three first Arguments, nor indeed could he with any colour of Reason, so that Three Squadrons of Mr. *Scipio*'s Army are entirely cut off, nor had he the Courage so much as to attempt to recruit them: Nay, he tamely gives 'em up for *Dead*; and confesses, * that the *Life of the whole Arguments put together, depends on the Evidence of those Matters of Fact*. If his *Cameronian* Story, and the two other want Evidence, or do not affect the *Dissenters*; then by his own Confession, his Three other Arguments want *Life*. When he brought these doughty Squadrons first into the Field, he took it for granted they had Life and Strength in 'em, but now they are *Dead* and unserviceable to him, who can help it? He should have taken some Care to cover the Carkasses of his slain Regiments, and not suffer their offensive Remains to infect the Air. But when a *Valiant General* is reduced to those extremities, as to be able only to take Care of his own Person; he is to be pitied, if not excus'd, for neglecting an Act of Piety, to which his *Heroick Nature* wou'd have ge-

* *Letter*, Page 19.

nerously

nerously disposʼd him. But he is not without some hopes, but the *Cameronian-Story* may inspire Life into 'em, and give 'em a *Resurrection*; and therefore he labours all he can to support the Credit of it. The Story in short is this. One Collonel *Fairfax* reported in a Publick House at *Rochdale* to the Reverend Mr. *Piggot* and Mr. *Milne*, that a *Scotch Cameronian* had Cited this corrupt Place in a Publick Sermon.

To this I answerʼd, 1. It is uncertain, whether Collonel *Fairfax* reported it, for Mr. *Milne* avers he never was in the Collonel's Company; so that the Report depends on Mr. *Piggot*'s single Testimony: And some say, this is not the first Brat, he has impos'd on the World. 2. If the Collonel reported it, it is but a *single Evidence*, nor does he say he heard the *Cameronian* himself urge this corrupt Reading, so that what he Deposes, is by *hear-say*, nor does he Name the *Person*, *Place*, or *Time*. Such a *blind Evidence* would look ridiculous in a Court of Justice. 3. I Publish'd an Extract of the Vote of the *General Assembly of* Scotland, wherein they disown this Corruption, and declare they never heard of any in that Kingdom, that apply'd that Text to prove the People's Power in Ordaining their Ministers. This may ground a just Suspicion, that the Story was invented in *Rochdale*, at a Publick House, for it is not so much as known in *Scotland*, nor mention'd by such of the *Episcopal Dissenters* as have Publish'd abundance of extravagant Stories to reproach the Government there.

These things are enough to invalidate his *Cameronian Story* with all unprepossess'd Persons, but the Rector, whose Talent lies in collecting and improving Stories, wou'd have the World believe *Matter of Fact* is very true, because

1. *'Tis plain, the Collonel believ'd it, nor would he entertain a Story without good ground*, Page 20.

Soldiers and Travellers are not the most exact in examining the grounds of every Story they hear, and perhaps report again over their Liquors to divert the Company. 'Tis plain, that Persons of a more *sacred Character* can *entertain* groundless Stories, and *entertain* their Hearers with them, for want of better Matter to fill up their Hour, though *perhaps* the Rector is the only Man that borrows materials for his *Sermons* out of the *Can-Office*.

If the *Collonel* had *good ground* for his Relation, why had he not nam'd the *Person*, *Time* and *Place*? There is good Reason, I confess, why these Circumstances should be omitted by the *Collonel* and the *Rector*, that we might be put beyond all possibility of detecting the falsity of the Report. I ob-

I obſerv'd that ſuch a blind Evidence, where *Perſons*, *Time* and *Place* are not nam'd, wou'd look ridiculous in a Court of Juſtice, but the Rector good Man, does not pretend to obſerve the troubleſome *Forms of Juſtice* in the management of his Charge.

He Anſwers.

2. *Such Teſtimonies are not ſufficient to ground a judiciary definitive Sentence upon, yet they are oftentimes believ'd by the Court.*

By his own Confeſſion the Rector is an *unjuſt Judge*, for he has poſitively condemn'd us without Evidence. The Deſign of his Sermon, and Vindication of it, is to prove us Corrupters of the Word of God; and the *Evidence is blind, and wou'd not paſs in any Court of Juſtice*, but that of the Rector's, as himſelf is forc'd to acknowledge. He may Believe and Judge as he pleaſes, but while he produces no other Evidence to *Condemn* us by, but what wou'd acquit us in all *Courts of Juſtice*; we will take leave to appeal from his unrighteous Sentence, to the ſober and rational Sentiments of Mankind.

He wou'd do well to tell us what ſort of *Faith* that is, which Courts of Juſtice give to a *blind Evidence*, which he ſaith, *they often Believe*. The Papiſts have brought an *implicite Faith into the Church*, but the Rector is the firſt Man that brings an *implicite Faith* into *Courts of Juſtice*. He makes them to *believe* an Accuſation *againſt John a Nokes* and *John a Stile*, that Mr. *Some-body* has committed a very great Crime, as ſuppoſe corrupting the Word of God; but the Deponent knows neither the *Man*, nor his *Name*, nor his *Countrey*, nor the *Time when*, nor the *Place* where the Offence was committed; nor can he ſay any thing of the Matter, but by *hear-ſay*. Will any Body in his ſound Mind believe this Evidence?

Surely our *Learned Judges* are not ſuch *Credulous Coxcombs* as the Rector makes 'em to be, nor can I think him ſuch a one himſelf, though for ſome Reaſons he thinks fit to abuſe the World; I preſume he has more Senſe than to believe his own Evidence, but it's no ſtrange thing for Perſons, abandon'd to unreaſonable and injurious Paſſions to abuſe the very *Courts of Juſtice*, that wou'd reduce them to the inoffenſive Government of Reaſon.

But an Evidence (as he proceeds) *may be ſufficient for private Conviction, which will not be allow'd of in Publick Forms of Juſtice*, Ibid.

It's hard to underſtand what he means by *Private Conviction*. Does he mean by it, that it's lawful to defame a Man upon any *blind Evidence*, provided it be done behind his Back and in Private? This is to wound a Man's Reputation in Secret, and inconſiſtent with the Character of a Citizen of *Sion*, *Pſalm* 15.

Or

Or does he mean upon such an Evidence, we may entertain a *Private Belief* of a Man's being guilty, but can't Publish his Guilt, because the Evidence is not according to the *Publick Forms of Justice*. Why then had not the Rector contented himself with his *Private Faith* concerning us, and not Publish'd our *pretended Conviction* to the World? A Publick Conviction ought to be according to the *Publick Forms of Justice* by his own Confession, and therefore he is self-condemn'd for receding from the allow'd Rules of Justice.

The Rector has but one other Refuge left, and if that fails him, his *Cameronian* Story fastens upon him an *indelible Reproach*. *Paul* saith he, *accuses some of the* Corinthians, *and he had it from some of the House of* Cloe, *whom he mentions not, for disparaging him. His Letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily Presence is weak and contemptible*, 2 Cor. 10. 10. Here was neither *Person*, nor *Time*, nor *Place named*, *and yet* Paul *believed the Report*, page 20.

To which I Answer.

1. How does the Rector know the Apostle had this Information from *some of the House of* Chloe? He doth not say so, 2 *Cor.* 10. 10. But the Rector has a singular Faculty in discovering Secret Matters, or rather in making bold Conjectures. He finds that those of *Chloe* had inform'd St. *Paul*, that there were Contentions at *Corinth*, when the first Epistle was Written, 1 *Cor.* 1. 11. And therefore he concludes, they must be his Informers when he wrote his *Second Epistle*, which was at least some Months after.

2. It was not necessary to Name *Persons*, where no question was made of the Matter of Fact, and yet it does not follow, but the Apostle knew well enough, who the Persons were. He had good Evidence of the Truth of the Report, otherwise he had not mention'd it with so much Assurance. And perhaps, he suppress'd their Names, because he wou'd not expose 'em to Publick Reproach, but by an indefinite Reproof reduce 'em to Repentance, 1 *Cor.* 4. 6.

3. When I saw the Name of St. *Paul*, I began to hope the Rector was coming to himself, and willing to imitate that great Pattern of *Sincerity* and *Charity*, which he so much recommends in one of his Epistles, to which the Rector refers us; 1 *Cor.* 13. but I soon perceiv'd my Error, and found that the Rector had read those Epistles, not with design to Practice that *Charity which thinks no Evil*, 1 Cor. 13. 5. But to draw in St. *Paul* to his Party to Patronize a *false Accusation*, tho' the Unhappiness of it is, St. *Paul* mentions a Matter of Fact that no Body disown'd; that he cou'd have prov'd on the guilty Persons, had they deny'd it; and it never enter'd into *Paul's* mind

mind to charge the whole Church of *Corinth* with the ſupercilious Cenſures of the few falſe Apoſtles, that were there; but our Rector mentions a Fact that no Body knows any thing of, that he cannot prove, tho' he has left no Stone unturn'd in attempting it, and in Imitation of *Haman*, not of St. *Paul*, he imputes the ſuppoſed fault of one Perſon, and that a *Scotch-man*, to the whole Body of *Engliſh-Diſſenters*.

4. I cannot think St. *Paul* got his Information in an *Ale-Houſe*, or from a *Soldier of Fortune*, or that he wou'd have been ſo credulous as the *Rector's Courts of Juſtice*, who oftentimes *believe a ſort of blind Evidence*, that affects neither *Perſon*, *Time*, nor *Place*. The Apoſtle had more Wiſdom and Honeſty, than to receive ſuch *malicious Accuſations*. Suppoſe the Church of *Corinth* had remonſtrated to St. *Paul*, that they knew of no Perſon that had *diſparag'd* him, and that they diſapprov'd of ſuch a Cenſure; can any Body imagine but his Candor would have acquitted them, except he could make good his Charge by poſitive Proof. 'Thoſe of the Church of *Scotland*, have diſclaim'd 'the Error of the Preſs, which the Rector Charges upon them, and 'affirm they neither know, nor can learn, that ever any in their Na-'tion did apply that Error to the People's Power in making Mini-'ſters. But the Rector, charitable Man, ſtands to his Accuſation, and wou'd feign have it paſs for Truth, tho' he offers not any thing that looks like the ſhadow of a *Proof*.

So much of the *Cameronian* Fable.

As to his Story of Mr. *Jolly*'s alledging this corrupt Reading, in Diſcourſe with Mr. *Elliſon* at *Duckenfield-Hall*: 'I told him, that He 'and Mr. *Elliſon* are well-advis'd in their Reports; the one tells a 'Story of a nameleſs *Cameronian* in *another Kingdom*, the other Names 'his Perſon, but you muſt find him in *another World*, for he was Dead 'before this Report of him was Publiſh'd; they are reſolv'd to put 'us out of all hopes of being ever able to examine the Truth of their 'Tales.

The Rector anſwers, *There are thoſe that can tell Mr.* Owen, *there was ſuch a Miniſter as Mr.* Jolly, *there is ſuch a Place as* Duckenfield-Hall, *&c.*

How does this prove the thing in Hand? Does it follow, becauſe there was ſuch a Man as Mr. *Jolly* at *Duckenfield-Hall*, and ſuppoſe engag'd with Mr. *Elliſon* in ſome Diſpute about *Church-Government*. That he muſt be a Corrupter of the Word of God? This is as concluding, as the Rector's Argument concerning *Cambridge*, 1638. He found there as he thought five or ſix *Presbyterians* among Two Thouſand

ſand Scholars, therefore they were the Authors of the Corruption in *Acts* 3. 6.

Mr. *Elliſon*'s Teſtimony is a *ſingle one*, and againſt a Dead Man, who cannot Anſwer for himſelf.

True, ſaith the Rector, but no Judge, but upon ſuch Teſtimonies won'd Decree the Nuncupative Will of a Deceaſed Perſon good and valid, p. 21.

No Judge won'd Decree a *Nuncupative Will* good upon a ſingle Teſtimony. Our Law requires the Oaths of three Witneſſes, if the Eſtate bequeath'd be conſiderable; nor doth it admit any Teſtimony of a Nuncupative Will after ſix Months, unleſs it were committed to Writing within ſix Days after making the ſaid Will, Stat. 29. *Car.* II. Cap. 3. So careful is the Law to prevent *Frauds and Forgeries*, reſpecting the Dead. I inquire not, whether there are not more than *ſix Months* between the reporting of this Story, and the Time of the pretended Diſpute, and whether it was Written within ſix Days after. Be that Matter as it will, Mr. *Elliſon*'s *ſingle Evidence* againſt the *Dead* is not *legal*, as the Rector ignorantly inſinuates

I am told, that Mr. *Jolly* was look'd upon as *Freshyterian* in his Judgment, and it is not likely he wou'd urge a corrupt Text to vindicate an Opinion, that was inconſiſtent with his Principles.

So much of the *Duckenfield-Hall* Story.

I ſhall ſpeak a Word or two to the *Bolton*-Story, which is this. 'A Gentleman, now living in *Bolton* heard ſome *Diſſenters* cite *Acts* '6. as the *Cameronian* did, and they appealed to the *Scotch* Bible.

To this I anſwer'd, that I ſuſpected the Truth of this Story, becauſe few of the *Scotch*-Bibles are miſprinted, as I made it appear by a Catalogue of the Editions, the two that were miſprinted there were under the Biſhops.

The Rector wiſely over-looks this, as he does moſt of my Book, but according to his uſual *Modeſty*; he ſaith, *The Story is an unexceptionable Proof of what it was produced for*, p. 21.

That part of it that concerns the *Scotch-Bibles*, I have detected to be falſe. When a Man is found to falter in one part of a Story, the Credit of the whole is juſtly ſuſpected.

The *Bolton* Gentleman is alſo a *ſingle Witneſs*, and Names no *Perſons*, nor appears above Board himſelf Truth needs not ſneak into Corners, it dares ſhew it's Face, and fears no Oppoſition. There is ſomething of *Myſtery* in it, that this Witneſs conceals his own *Name*, and thoſe of the accuſed *Diſſenters*. I am apt to think they may be *alive* as well as the Gentleman. I ſuppoſe, if they had been *Dead*, we ſhould have had their Names enroll'd with Mr. *Jolly*'s. But ſuppoſe theſe Stories had been true, they cannot affect the whole Body of *Diſſenters*.

I have now anſwer'd all that the Rector has to ſay in Confirmation of his Charge, and appeal to the World, whether this Man has done us common Juſtice. All his Four Arguments are dwindled into *one*, which contains *Matter of Fact*. He confeſſes himſelf, that the *Life of the whole Argument put together, depends on the Evidence of thoſe Matters of Fact* which makes his Fourth Argument.

Now ſince his *Matters of Fact* want *legal Evidence*, his Three former Arguments, which he has deſerted, are deſtitute of *Life* by his own Confeſſion.

Thus all the Forces of this mighty Warrier are routed *, and tho' he has *made Lies his laſt Refuge*, this alſo not only fails him, but expoſes him to the vindictive Stroaks of victorious Truth, whoſe Triumphant Chariot he follows with ſuch a *diſpirited Aſpect*, as if he wou'd move the Compaſſions of the Spectators, and implore the kind Interceſſions of his Reader, that his *expiring Reputation* be not made a *Victim* to the juſt Reſentments of injur'd Innocence. One while he is *content to ſurrender the Intereſts of his Reputation to the* Diſſenters, *p.* 26. He hopes they'll be ſo kind to him, as not to condemn him for *Fool*, or Knave, or *Impudent*, or *Blaſphemer*, Ibid. Our *Scipio Anglicanus* cries Quarter, and hopes for Mercy at their Hands, tho' he has injur'd them to the utmoſt of his Power. He knows the Men, that they are like the *Kings of Iſrael*, of a *merciful* Diſpoſition, but then he ought to make his addreſs with a *Rope about his Neck*, as the *Syrian General* did before him; humbly acknowledging his Crime, and I dare Promiſe for 'em, they'll paſs a very favourable Sentence upon him. Another while he pretends, he *could have anſwer'd every Paragraph in my Vindication, but to what Purpoſe? When ſhall we have an end?* p. 26. Who dare Queſtion the Rector's Abilities to Anſwer my Book, ſince he gives no Proof of 'em? But *to what Purpoſe* ſhould a Man, who is ſufficiently baſtinadoed procure to himſelf more blows? It is a wiſer part *to end the Matter*, let him ceaſe his unjuſt Criminations, and we ſhall ſoon *make an end*; and until he does ſo, let him expect the Chaſtiſement that is due *unto bold and obſtinate Calumniators*. He complains I give him hard Words, to which I anſwer in the Words of *Veſpaſian* the Emperor, *Qui Prior laceſſivit ſeipſum Prærogativâ dignitatis privavit*. The Rector by publiſhing ſo baſe and groundleſs a Calumny, and attempting to juſtifie it againſt the moſt convictive Reaſon, has forfeited the Benefit of thoſe Civilities that are owing to a fair Adverſary. He *brags* he has made *War* upon us, and then complains of *hard blows*.

* Iſaiah. 28. 15.

His

His Sermon, and the Defence of it, abound with the rudeſt Invectives. But he pretends, *that he has engag'd himſelf by Promiſe not to Anſwer a Fool according to his Folly*, Prov. 26. 4. Which he ſays, *he'll religiouſly obſerve*, Lett. *p.* 1. He promiſes *not to give ill Language*, (Ibid.) and in the ſame Breath calls me *Fool*. It ſeems, to call a Man *Fool* is no *ill Language* with the Rector, whatever it was in Chriſt's account *. How *religiouſly* he obſerves his Promiſe, the Reader may obſerve in ſeveral Inſtances. In *p.* 19. he compares us to Malefactors that have Brow enough to aſſert their Innocence, when the *Halter is about their Necks*. In *p.* 23. he ſaith, they ſeem to be of the Humor of that *lewd Soldier*, who excus'd himſelf thus, that the Commandment is, *thou ſhalt not*, but not *I ſhall not*. In *p.* 26. he ſuggeſts by way of Query, *Whether Mr.* O. *has not done what in him lies to deſerve the Character of a great Rogue*, for affirming that the Rector had given him that Character in his *R. R.* p. 58. to which Mr. *O.* ſtill appeals. It is true, he does it by a *ſly Inſinuation*, and becauſe I take notice of his calling me ſo, he pretends that I miſrepreſent him, and deſerve that Character for ſo doing. I only mention theſe things as inſtances of his *Religious Performance* of his Promiſe, not to give *ill Language*. *Naturam expellas furca licet. Can the Ethiopian change his Skin?*

He falls foul on the *Note-maker*, p. 22. in whom I am not concern'd: It wou'd have look'd more honourable in the Rector to have anſwer'd his Arguments, than to ſet up for *Informer General*, to accuſe the whole Body of *Diſſenters* of a Crime he can never prove upon 'em.

In *p.* 23. he reflects on Mr. *Baxter*, but not a word of his corrupting the Scripture, by leaving out *theſe* in *Acts* 15. 28. Since I ſhew'd him the like Omiſſion in the *Homilies of the Church*.

He wiſely overlooks this Crime, which he had aggravated in the Epiſtle before his Sermon, and in his *Remark upon Remark* But now he ſilently diſmiſſes Mr. *B.* whom he cannot Condemn without involving himſelf and the *Church of England* in the ſame Sentence.

Now ſuppoſe a Man of Mr. *Gips* his Temper, ſhou'd take up his Arguments againſt Mr. *B.* and retort it upon the Church of *England*; by affirming, that the Church *hath cunningly left out the Word* (*theſe*) *merely to ſupport her Propoſition, and hath not had the Ingenuity to confeſs her Error, nor yet the Courage to Palliate it with any excuſe* †; nó, nor has her Champion, the Courage to do it for her, *tho' he has been told of it* ‖. And he is the more concern'd to do it, becauſe he has ſub-

* Mat. 5. 22. † *Epiſtle before his Sermon.* ‖ *Ibid.*

ſcribed

ſcribed her *Homilies*, which the *Diſſenters* have not done, and ſo made himſelf acceſſory to the Corruption.

Though the Rector has diſingennouſly *deſerted* the Church, and left her *unvindicated* under the odious Imputation of *corrupting the Word of God*, I will be ſo juſt to her, as to acquit her from ſo black a Charge. It was not the Deſign of the Compilers of the *Homilies*, nor of Mr. *B.* to quote the very Words of Scripture, nor was the Omiſſion of the word *theſe* deſign'd for any ill ends by either of 'em.

I ſhall now return to the former Part of his Letter, and can't but take notice what an Artiſt the Rector is in methodizing his Epiſtle. The principal Controverſie between him and me; was, *Whether the* Diſſenters *were corrupters of the Word of God?* The other about the *Titles of the Pſalms*, and the *Corruption of the Hebrew Copies* came in accidentally, and therefore I threw it into a *Poſt-ſcript* by it ſelf, that it might not interfere with the *main Point* in debate.

The Rector being ſenſible that he is quite baffled in the principal Controverſie between us, and having nothing material to offer more upon that Subject, begins his Letter with Animadverſions on my *Poſt-Script*, and comes not to the *main point*, viz. His charge exhibited againſt the *Diſſenters of corrupting the Word of God*, untill *P.* 19. and then ſpeaks next to nothing of it. All he has to ſay to the principal Subject in debate, takes up but *Three Pages of his Letter*, which conſiſts of Twenty-ſeven in all. Had he been able to ſay more to it, to be ſure he would have done it, for he ſtill ſhews his *Good-will* to the Cauſe; and would have the World believe the *main charge is beyond all Controverſie*, *P.* 19. Since he can defend it no longer, he wou'd perſwade us to be ſo good Natured, as to let it paſs *without any further Controverſie*; and if we don't, we are like *thoſe Malefactors that aſſert their Innocence, when the Halter is about their Necks*, &c. *P.* 19. If our *Accuſer* had the Honour to be our Executioner, I ſee we muſt expect little Mercy at his Hands, We muſt all undergo the Fate of *Saul's Seven Children*, who were hung up before the Lord for their Fathers Sin. And it would be no Relief to us to aſſert our *Innocency*, for we muſt bear the Error of the *Scotch-Cameronian*. And if we ſay, this is hard meaſure, to Impute the fault of one Man to all *Diſſenters*, the Rector Anſwers, that this muſt needs be juſt, becauſe *Saul's offence was Reveng'd upon Seven of his Children*. R. R. *P.* 48. The Rector is a Man that loves to harp upon the ſame *String* in all his *Compoſures*, and were we to ſtand at his Bar, I much doubt, whether he would allow us *the Benefit of the Clergy*; and if ſuch a favour were granted us: I fear we ſhould ſcarce read our *Neck-verſe*, without being condemn'd for *Corrupting the Word of God*.

But

But to return, from this *Hanging Digreſſion*, to his Animadverſions, on my *Poſt-Script*, wherein I aſſerted, *the Divine Authority of the Titles of the Pſalms and the purity of the Hebrew Text.*

As to the Firſt of theſe, the Rector does not pretend to *Anſwer* my Arguments for the Divine Authority of the *Titles*, or to *Vindicate* his own againſt it; and the Reaſon of this omiſſion is obvious: For where he thinks he has any thing, that he can take Advantage of he lays hold on it. He ſays, *P.* 2. That I *give him Words of Braſs*, by pronouncing him a *Blaſphemer*, for *ſaying that many of the Titles were to no Purpoſe at all.* I did not expreſly call him ſo, but what I ſaid I ſay again. 'That it wou'd have look'd more modeſt in him, 'to have ſaid, we underſtand not the uſe of many *Titles*; than 'boldly, if not Blaſphemouſly, to Charge the Spirit of God with '*Impertinencies*, Vind. *P.* 44. And in another Place to ſay, that *Pſalm*, 72 20. *Is manifeſtly falſe if the Title be true*, R. R. *P.* 13. Many would call this *Blaſphemy*, but I do not. It is a very poor Shift, by which he would mollifie his Words, *the Titles are to no Purpoſe at all*; that is, they are not uſeful to unfold Myſteries, *Let. P.* 2. *To no Purpoſe, and to ſuch a Purpoſe* are very different things; ſuch as do not unfold Myſteries may be uſeful to other Ends.

But they are more myſterious, ſays he, than the Pſalms themſelves; and the Spirit of God would not explain, Obſcurum per Obſcurius. All are not ſo, and thoſe that are obſcure to us, might be otherwiſe to the old *Hebrews.*

Greg. Nyſſen obſerved (as the Rector adds) *that there was not an entire Agreement between, the Chriſtians and the Jews about the Titles, which Mr. O. has declin'd to Anſwer to, P.* 3. You ſee, tho' the Rector cannot Anſwer my Arguments, nor defend his own, he ſtudies every little Advantage. I told him, I had not *Greg.* by me, tho' I ſee nothing in him as he repreſents him, that makes againſt my Argument. There is not an entire Agreement, between the *Greek* Bible which was in the Hands of the Chriſtians, and the *Hebrew* Bible to this day, in many more things than the *Titles* of the *Pſalms*, and yet we receive the *Hebrew* Bible as Divinely inſpir'd; and ſo we do the *Titles* of the Pſalms.

But, if the Rector cannot defend his *old Arguments*, he hath found out a *new one*, which is this: *The Titles of the ſeveral Books of Scripture, are not Canonical; and the Titles of the Pſalms muſt run the ſame fate, P.* 3,4,5. And why ſo good Sir?

1. The Titles of the Books of Scripture, are acknowledg'd to be human Additions; I never met with any Author, *Jewiſh* or *Chriſtian*, that affirms them to be Canonical; but the *Titles* of the Pſalms,

Pſalms, are reputed Canonical, by the *Chriſtian* and *Jewiſh* Doctors; and commented upon by them as ſuch, whereas they rarely take notice of the *Titles* of the Books of Scripture, except it be now and then, to tell us that they bear ſuch Titles.

2. The Titles of the Books of the old Teſtament, in our *Hebrew* Bibles are put by themſelves, as diſtinct from the reſt of the Books; and are made the running Titles in the top of the Leaves. But, the Titles of the Pſalms are made part of the Pſalms themſelves, in all our *Hebrew* Bibles, in which the Title, if there be any to the Pſalm, is always the firſt Verſe.

3. All the Books of the Bible have Titles, but ſo have not all the Pſalms; If they had been *human Additions*, it had been as eaſie to have given a Title to each Pſalm, as to each Book of the Bible, but the ancient *Jews*, who durſt not add to the Word of God, would not prefix *Titles* to thoſe Pſalms, which originally had none.

The Books of the Prophets, as he goes on, are thus entitled, the Book of the Prophet Iſaiah, &c. I cannot think the Inſpir'd Prophets ſet theſe Titles on the head of their Books.

Here the Rector *thinks* aright, for the Title he mentions is to be found only in the *Engliſh Tranſlation*; the *Hebrew* and *Greek* Bibles which he had not diligence enough to conſult, have no more than *Iſaiah*.

He nibbles at a conceſſion of Mine, that it was a prevailing Opinion, that all the Pſalms were pen'd by *David*, *what then*, demands he, *will become of the Title of the* 90. *Pſalm*? *P.* 5.

I obviated this Query in the very next Line, out of *Theodoret*, who ſays, *David* wrote it, but adapted it to *Moſes*. 'I told the 'Rector that I preſum'd the Titles were left out of the Liturgy 'Pſalms, becauſe they were deſign'd to be Sung. *Vind. P.* 53. *'Tis my very Plea in Defence of the Church of* England *, ſaith he: But you muſt thank me for it, Mr. Rector, for you thought of no ſuch *Plea* in your Sermon, but call on the *Diſſenters*, to prefix the Titles to the Singing Pſalms, if they be part of Scripture. I objected, that in the Pariſh Churches, the Pſalms that want Titles are read. True, ſaith the Rector, *'tis the fault of ſome, the crime of others, the unhappineſs of others, who cannot prevail, with their People to bear a part in the rehearſing of them; for the order of the Church is, that they be ſaid or ſung, ſaid, that is at leaſt repeated* alternatim, *by Miniſter and People, which is a Species of ſinging. P.* 6.

If the order be *ſay or ſing*. Firſt, how can it be a *Fault*, a *Crime*,

* *Lester*, Page 6.

to

to *ſay* the Pſalms and not to *ſing* them, the *Rubric* allows both, and therefore both are lawful. No wonder the Rector charges us with *Crimes* he cannot prove, ſince he doth ſo by his own Brethren, he makes 'em *Criminals* for doing what the *Rubric* bids 'em do.

Secondly, I thought *ſaying* and *ſinging*, being mention'd *disjunctively*, were different things, but with the Rector, *ſaying* is a Species of *ſinging*. Does not this Man *Ridicule the Rubric of the Church*, by makeing it ſpeak Non-ſenſe? *ſay or ſing*. that is, according to the Rector's Expoſition, *ſing or ſay*: This looks like defaming the *Common-Prayer*, for which I remit him to the Cenſure of his Ordinary.

Thirdly, I never yet cou'd ſee any *Rubric* or Canon for reading the Pſalms *alternatim*, Authors make mention of *alternate ſinging*, which was us'd with great variety in ancient Times.

* *Baſil* ſaith, the Congregation was divided into two Parts, and ſung *alternately* one to another.

† *Chryſoſtom* ſeems to allow the People no part in ſinging, but the ecchoing out, of the laſt Word of the Verſe, ὁ ἀνὴρ ὁ πολλὰ πολλάκις μόνος καὶ πάντας ἀπηχῶν ——, He that ſingeth, ſingeth alone, and all the reſt *Ecchо* forth the laſt Words. And it may be, this is the meaning of the Council of *Laodicea*, Can. 15. Wherein they forbid all ſinging in the Church, except by the *Regular Singers*.

Gregory the Great, forbids any to ſing in the Church but the *Inferior Orders*, as the Sub-Deacons, *&c. Lib.* 4. *c.* 88. Perhaps he had an Eye to this Canon. *Dionyſius*, who goes under the Name of the *Areopagite*, ſays, that the Biſhop with the whole *Eccleſiaſtical Order* ſing the Sacred Hymns, *Eccleſ. Hierarch.* c. 3. It ſeems the People were wholly excluded from the Publick Praiſes. The way of ſinging *alternately* is very ancient, ſome derive it from *Moſes* and *Miriam*, Exod. 15. 21. *And Miriam anſwered them*, &c. But it is uncertain how *Miriam* and the Women of *Iſrael* ſung, whether they ſung in their Dances, the very ſame Words that *Moſes* and the Men of *Iſrael* ſung, or whether they ſung the firſt Verſe of *Moſes*'s Song by way of Intercalation, as the Burden of that Song; and it may be ותען *anſwer'd*, ſignifies no more than *ſhe ſaid*, in which Senſe the Word *Anſwer* is us'd in the New Teſtament, *Matth.* 11. 25. But its evident here, that it was different from the Manner of reading the Pſalms with us, for *Miriam* and the Women ſung the *firſt Verſe* of *Moſes* Song, and with us the Miniſter reads the firſt Verſe of the Pſalm, which the People neither Read nor Sing.

It ſhould ſeem by *Joſephus*, that the *Levites* only ſung in the Tem-

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* *Epiſt.* 36. † *Chr.* 1 Cor. 14. *Hom.* 36. *ad finem.*

ple

ple at *Jerusalem* *. The *Essenes*, as *Philo* affirms, had one chief Singer, who sung alone until he came to the last Words, then all the People join'd with him ||.

This way of Singing by Parts was used by the ancient *Heathens*, as appears by that in *Homer* †, who represents the Muses singing *alternately*.

Αἳ ἄειδον ἀμειβόμεναι ὀπὶ καλῇ.

The first Man that appointed *Antiphons* or Responsory Singing in *Constantinople* was *Chrysostom*, in Emulation of the *Arians*, as *Socrates* affirms. *Eccl. Hist.* VI. 8.

Nicephorus ascribes the Invention of *Antiphons* to *Ignatius*, who in a Vision heard the Angels praising the Trinity in *Responsory Hymns*, which he thereupon introduc'd into the Church of *Antioch*. Eccl. Hist. XIII. 8.

But be this matter as it will, there is no Precedent that ever I could meet with for *Reading* the Psalms *alternately*, nor cou'd I ever find either *Canon* or *Rubric* for it in the Church of *England*. And if there be neither, it looks like a piece of *Will-Worship*, that can neither be warranted by the Laws of God nor Man. It seems neither *decent* nor *orderly*, nor agreeable to the Apostle's Rule, that a *Woman should not speak in the Church*: And in our Parish-Churches, they *speak* as loud as the Men. If Reading be Teaching or Preaching, as some Doctors of the Church have affirm'd, particularly the present Bishop of *Derry*, our Reading Women usurp the Office of *Teachers* in the Church, and thereby strengthen the Hands of the *Quaker's Women-Preachers*. This way of Reading the Psalms, fills the Congregation with a confus'd noise, that the Ignorant that cannot Read, understand not one Word that is said. *Cyprian* Condemns *tumultuous Lopuacity* in our Devotions.

Non passim ventilare preces nostras inconditis vocibus, nec Petitionem, commendandum modestè Deo, tumultuosâ Loquacitate jactare, De Orat. Dom.

I affirm'd, 'That the not Reading of the Titles (in the *Parochi-* '*al Assemblies* which I had mention'd a little before) was an *Inno-* '*cent Omission*, but the Rectors attempt to thrust 'em out of the Ho- '*ly* Canon was Vile and Impious.

The Rector applies this *Omission* to the *Dissenters*, and cries Hem!

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* *Antiq. Judaic.* XX. 8. || *Euseb. Hist.* II. 16. *Edit. Christ. & Philo de vitâ Contempl.* † *Iliad. à versus fin.*

An

an *Innocent Omiſſion?* no, ſaith he, 'tis a *Sacrilegious Omiſſion*, Lett. *P.* 7. This blind Combatant, by attempting to wound his *Enemies* as he calls them, Stabs his own *Friends*, and makes them guilty of a *Sacrilegious Omiſſion*: The *Diſſenters* do read the Titles of the reading Pſalms.

The Rector proceeds in the next Place to conſider the *Hebrew Copies*, which he ſays are much *corrupted*, and becauſe St. *Jerom* aſſerts the Purity of 'em; he perſecuttes him with the ſame malignity as he does the *Diſſenters*. I rebuk'd him in my *Vind.* for his indecent Uſage, of ſo Holy and Learned a Father, and ſo eminent a Champion for the Chriſtian Cauſe, againſt all ſorts of Oppoſers, I refer the Reader to his Character, and my Defence of him againſt the Rector's Calumnies, *Poſt-Script* C. 3. He ſeverely Cenſures Mr. *Baxter*, both in his *R. R.* P. 61. and in his Lett. *P.* 23. For *expoſing the Infirmities of the Fathers, to whoſe Zeal and Learning, we owe our Religion under God*; and yet flings all the dirt on St. *Jerom*, one of the moſt eminent of 'em, which *Malice and Rage and intemperate Zeal*, (they are his own Words of Mr. *Baxter*) could furniſh him with. He treats him more baſely than ever *Ruffinus*, his profeſs'd Adverſary has done. His Great Name in the Chriſtian World is too venerable to ſuffer any Diminution by the Rector's ſelf-condemning reflections, and needs not any Apology of mine. Therefore I will conſider what he has to offer againſt the Purity of the *Hebrew Bibles*, which he wou'd have us believe are corrupted in *material Things*.

The Truths of Revelation, ſays he, *are to be ſought for not out of the Hebrew Texts only, nor out of the* Lxx. *only, but out of both together, with all other antient Tranſlations, and the numerous quotations of Scripture in the Fathers. P.* 11. The meaning of this Harangue, is, that there might be patch'd up a *compleat Bible* or a perfect Syſtem of reveal'd *Truths* out of the *Hebrew*, Lxx. other Tranſlations and Quotations of the Fathers; but none of theſe *alone* contain all *Truths of Revelation*. The Papiſts ſend us to the ancient Fathers for the Senſe of Scriptures, but the Rector remits us to them for the Scriptures themſelves. He wou'd do well to favour the World with a *Compleat Collection of the Truths of Revelation*, out of all theſe Stores, which are inacceſſible to the Unlearned, and he is the more oblig'd to do it becauſe he has condemn'd our *Corrupt* Bibles to be burnt.

I offer'd *four* Arguments for the Purity of the *Hebrew Copies*, which I vindicated and confirm'd.

The Rector touches at *the firſt*, over looks the *Second* and *Third*, and ſplits the *Fourth* into *Two*.

My firſt was, 'That the *Hebrew Bible* was incorrupt in our Savi-

'our's Time, becauſe he never charg'd the *Jews* with corrupting the 'Scriptures.

No more, anſwers he, *do the Apoſtles Charge them with corrupting the* LXX. *P.* 11. I don't ſay the LXX. was corrupted at that Time, there were Authentick incorrupt Copies of it even in *Origen's* Time. *They were corrupted*, ſaith he, *before Ezra's Time*, (*according to moſt of the Fathers*) *and therefore much more between Ezra and Chriſt*, *P.* 12.

Clemens Alexandrinus and moſt of the Fathers ſay, that the Scriptures were *loſt*, not *corrupted* in *Babilon*, and reſtored by a Spirit of Inſpiration by *Ezra**. The ſame is affirm'd by *Ireneus* and *Euſebius*† Admitting they were *corrupted* before *Ezra's* Time, of which there is no certainty, it does not follow they were *corrupted* after, becauſe the *Maſora*, which was invented in *Ezra's* Time, was an effectual means to preſerve the Purity of them; this was my Third Argument, but the Rector takes no notice of it. Beſides, the Captivity cured the *Jews* of their Idolatrous Diſpoſition, and made them more Zealous for the Purity of the Law, as appears in the Hiſtory of the *Maccabees*. He ſaith in his *R. R.* P. 22. the *Hebrew Bibles* were not corrupted in any *material Thing* till *after the Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, and now they were corrupted *before the Birth of Chriſt*.

This Man cannot for his Life agree with himſelf. He overlooks ſeveral things in the Confirmation of my *Firſt Argument*, with my *Second* and *Third*, and hopps to the *Fourth Argument*; *That the Jews, neither could nor would corrupt the Hebrew Bibles.*

'I prov'd they could not, becauſe there was a Pure Copy in every 'Synagogue in the World, beſides thoſe in the Hands of the Chri-'ſtians, which wou'd ſoon have detected an attempt of that kind. I 'Quoted *Auſtin* and *Jerome* in confirmation of the Argument; and I 'added that the watchful Providence of God wou'd not have ſuffer'd 'ſuch an attempt to proſper.

He Anſwers only to this laſt Part of my Argument. *That Providence has permitted various readings in the New Teſtament*, p. 12. So it has in the old alſo, but what is this to the *Jews making bold with the Scripture in prejudice to Chriſtianity* and *corrupting them in very material Things*, as the Rector affirms, *R. R. P.* 22. The various readings of *Ben. Aſher* and *Ben. Napthali* are of uncertain Original, and *Capellus* himſelf, a more skilful improver of what may ſeem to impair the Authority of the *Hebrew* Text; confeſſes that they are trivial, and not in matters of any Moment.

The Rector excepted againſt the Purity of the *Hebrew* from *Juſtin*

* *Strom.* l. 1. † *Hiſt. Eccl.* v. 8.

Martyr,

Martyr, who charg'd the *Jews* with corrupting the Scriptures.

I prov'd, that *Justin Martyr* speaks of the *Greek Versions* of the Bible, and quoted his Words at large. This the Rector cannot deny, but saith he, the *Father examined not only the Copies used in the Jewish Synagogue* (*i. e.* those of the LXX.) *but in all likelihood* Hebrew *Copies too*, p. 14.

Justin no where mentions any Corruption of the *Hebrew*, but he expresly mentions the corrupting of the LXX. nor does the Rector; but *suppose* he examin'd the *Hebrew* Copies; He cannot affirm it, though he thinks he was acquainted with the *Hebrew* and *Syriack*. If I should grant he understood the *Hebrew*, it does not prove the Corruption of the *Hebrew Text*. But it is more probable he did not understand the *Hebrew*, because he mistakes the Etymology of *Israel*, which he derives from *Isra* a Man and *el* Strength, *q. Homo vincens Virtutem*. The Rector defends this Etymology, and saith by *virtutem* he means *God the Strength of Israel*, 1 Sam. 15. 29. *p.* 13.

He betrays his own Ignorance of the *Hebrew*, by vindicating *Justin*'s skill in it, for *Isra* does not signifie a *Man* in *Hebrew*. *Ish* signifies a *Man*, but *Israel* is from שרה *dominatus fuit prævaluit*, and אל God, as *Moses* explains it, *Gen.* 32. 28. כי שרית עם־אלהים, *because as a Prince thou hast Power with God*, as we well render it. *Justin* explains what he means by *El* δύναμις Power, no other God but the *God of this World*, for he makes *Jacob*'s Victory over the Angel a mysterious Representation of Christ's Victory over Satan, προσῆλθεν αὐτῷ ὁ διάβολος, τουτέστιν ἡ δύναμις ἐκείνη ἡ καὶ ὄφις καὶ Σατανᾶς, *the Devil came to him, which is that Power which is call'd the Serpent and Satan.*

* *Justin*'s δύναμις signifies the *Devil*, which the Rector by an unparallell'd Blunder makes to signifie the *true God*, where he reads ἀνίσχυσας μετὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ, he only quotes the Text of the LXX, but does not professedly give the Signification of *Israel*, as he does in this Place.

The Rector deserts his *Vossian* Argument of the Corruption of the *Hebrew Chronology*. He propos'd it out of *Vossius*, and made the best Improvement he cou'd of it, *R. R.* p. 25, 26. But now he is not at leisure to vindicate it, so that *Vossius* must shift for himself. And whereas the Rector positively affirm'd Two Thousand Years to be lost in the Chronology of our *Hebrew* Bible, and that the World must be Six Thousand Years Old when Christ came; I suggested, 'That he cannot prove that Christ is come in the Flesh, without re-'jecting the Authority of our *English* Bibles in Point of Chronology. The Rector Answers: *He can prove it by the* LXX, *or he will*

* *Just. M. Diab. cum Tryph.* p. 277, 278. *Edit. Sylburg.*

suppose the Hebrew *Chronology right, and then it is not necessary to follow the* Jewish *Principle of Six Thousand Years*, p. 15.

If the Rector prove it by the LXX, he renounces the Authority of our *English Corrupt Bibles* in Point of Chronology, which I said he must do by his Principle: If he admits the *Hebrew Chronology*, he rejects the LXX. I perceive he is unresolv'd which of the Two Chronologies to follow, but let him at his leisure chuse which he pleases, he still confirms my Argument. As to the Instance of *Cainan* in *Luc.* 3. if the Rector be not satisfied with what Dr. *Lightfoot* offers, whom he does not fairly answer, let him consult *Pol. Syn. Crit.* or *Gregory* of *Oxf.* his καϊνὰν δεύτερος, or Dr. *Fowler* the present Bishop of *Glocester*.

The Rector thinks, that the true Reading of *Deut.* 32. 8. ought to be *according to the number of Angels, because* Jerom *read it so*, p. 17.

Jerom translated the LXX. into *Latin*, and sometimes reads according to the *Hebrew* Verity, sometimes according to the LXX. He arraigns the 1 *Sam.* 2. 17. which he saith is Corrupted, and to be Corrected by the LXX, *p.* 17, 18.

I have consulted the Place, and find a perfect Agreement between the *Hebrew* and the LXX. The Poor Man's fancy is so vitiated with Ideas of Corruption, that if he do but look into the *Hebrew* Text, it appears corrupt and impure unto him. He has dwelt so long upon this Subject, that he can scarce think of any thing else but *Corruption, Corruption.* The Thought is natural enough, if he apply'd it to the proper Subject, namely to his own Writings, and not to the inspired Volumes. He has found another Corruption in *Deut.* 33. 6. where the *Hebrew* wants *not*, He adds, *That the Criticks take a great deal of Pains to patch up the* Hebrew *Verity, but without any Satisfaction to me, I profess*, p. 18.

I despair of satisfying this *hypercritical* Man, but for the Satisfaction of the Reader, I will take notice of two Things. 1. The *Hebrew* is, ויהי מתיו מספר *Let his Men be a Number*, which may be apply'd to a *great Number*, as well as a *small*, and so the Reading will be, *Let his Men be many*, and thus it agrees with the LXX, ἔστω πολὺς ἐν ἀριθμῷ. Let me add, that מתי may be rendred *Dead Men*, so some translate the Word in *Isa.* 41. 14. מתי ישראל *ye Dead Men of Israel*, and so the Reading will be, *Let thy Dead Men be few.* If מספר be rendred *few*, as it is by our Translators, and the Words are a *Blessing* and not a *Curse*, as he pretends they must be, if *not* be left out. 2. *Not* is frequently omitted in the *Hebrew*, and to be supply'd from the foregoing Sentence, as in *Isa.* 28. 27, 28. and 23. 4. *Psalm* 91. 4, 5.

4, 5. and 9. 18. I desire the Learned Reader to consult these places in the *Hebrew*, many more might be mention'd to the same Purpose. It may be the Rector will say, these also are *Corrupted*.

He takes notice that *Jerom* speaks doubtfully of two other Places in the Old Testament, as if they were Corrupted, *p.* 18.

But *Jerom* does not positively affirm, as the Rector doth; by how much he was more Learned than the Rector, he was so much the more Modest. *Jerom* saith, *We know not certainly, whether it was struck out of the ancient Copies, or added by the* LXX. The Rector saith with a daring boldness, *I have made good my Assertion, that the* Hebrew *Bibles have been Corrupted in all Ages*, p. 19.

The Rector has a singular faculty in making good his *Assertion*, without either vindicating his own Arguments, or answering mine to the contrary. The Truth is, his *Assertion* is so very *bad*, that a more accomplish'd Artist than himself, wou'd be at a loss how to make it *good*. It puts me in mind of a Story of King *James* the first, as some of his Nobles were exercising themselves at leaping, says the King pleasantly to 'em, you talk of leaping, I wou'd leap over yonder Wall, and pointed at a high Wall that was near 'em; Yes, Sir, says a Parasite that stood near him, I believe your Majesty cou'd leap over it: Hold Man, reply'd the King, I did not say I *cou'd* leap over it, but I *wou'd* do it, that is, if I were able. The Rector shews his *good* Will to confirm his Assertion, and has made some feeble attempts in his *R. R.* to attack the *Masora*, the *Fence* of the Law *, but the Wall is too *high* to be leap'd over, and too *strong* to be broken down, and therefore in his Letter he wisely declines it, lest he shou'd break his Shins, and be forced to a dishonourable Retreat.

But is he in earnest, when he says the *Hebrew Bibles have been corrupted in all Ages*? And has he made this good? It seems *all Ages* are comprehended in the Time of *Ezra* and *Justin Martyr* for he mentions no more; and he has not prov'd, that they were corrupted then. Our Bibles must be Corrupt indeed, if *every Age* has been practising upon 'em. According to the Rector, it has been the Work of *every Age* to Corrupt the Bible. It's well, if he allows us any sound part in it, for that which has been always in the Corrupting, must be a very Corrupt Thing at last. The Rector shou'd at least have paid as much deference to the Holy Bible, as he wou'd to the Prophane Works of *Homer* and *Virgil*, which none will say, *have been corrupted in all Ages*. It's a little unlucky, that this Man cannot quarrel with the *Dissenters*, but he must quarrel with the *Bi-*

* *Masora est sepimentum legis.* Elias Levita.

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ble alſo. He might have left the ſacred Volumes alone, though he were diſpos'd to reproach us. However he has one Conſolation, that he is not ſingular in his Hypotheſes, for he has *Mahometans*, *Papiſts* and *Deiſts* in his Intereſt, who unanimouſly charge our Scriptures with *material Corruptions.*

I ſhall add one thing more, and I have done. The Rector's Letter which bears Date, *April* 8. 1699. came not to my Hands, until *Aug.* 16. nor did I hear any thing of it, before I ſaw it. I preſume the Rector deſign'd it for the *Private Uſe* of his *Friend*, of whoſe Candid Acceptance he was well aſſur'd, and not for ſuch *ill-natur'd People*, as will take nothing upon Truſt, but Critically examine his weak Reaſonings, and vindicate themſelves from his unjuſt Criminations. He publiſh'd his Letter, as *Ariſtotle* did ſome of his Books, concerning which he ſaith, *I made 'em Publick, as if I had not made 'em Publick* *. He told us above, that his blind Evidence of the *Cameronian* Story may be ſufficient for *Private Conviction*, though not to be allow'd *in Publick Forms of Juſtice*, p. 20. Perhaps this *Epiſtle*, which manifeſtly recedes *from the Laws of Juſtice*, was deſign'd for *Private Conviction.* However, ſince it came accidentally to my Hands, and no return is made to it by his *Utopian Friend*, I have been ſo kind to the Rector, leſt he ſhould think himſelf ſlighted; as to Anſwer his Letter with all the plainneſs and faithfulneſs, which may ſeem neceſſary to regulate his *Faith* towards the *Scriptures*, and *Charity* towards his *Brethren.*

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* Ἴσθι αὐτοὺς καὶ δεδομένους καὶ μὴ ὀκδεδομένους. *Gell. Noct. Attic.* XX. 4.

FINIS.

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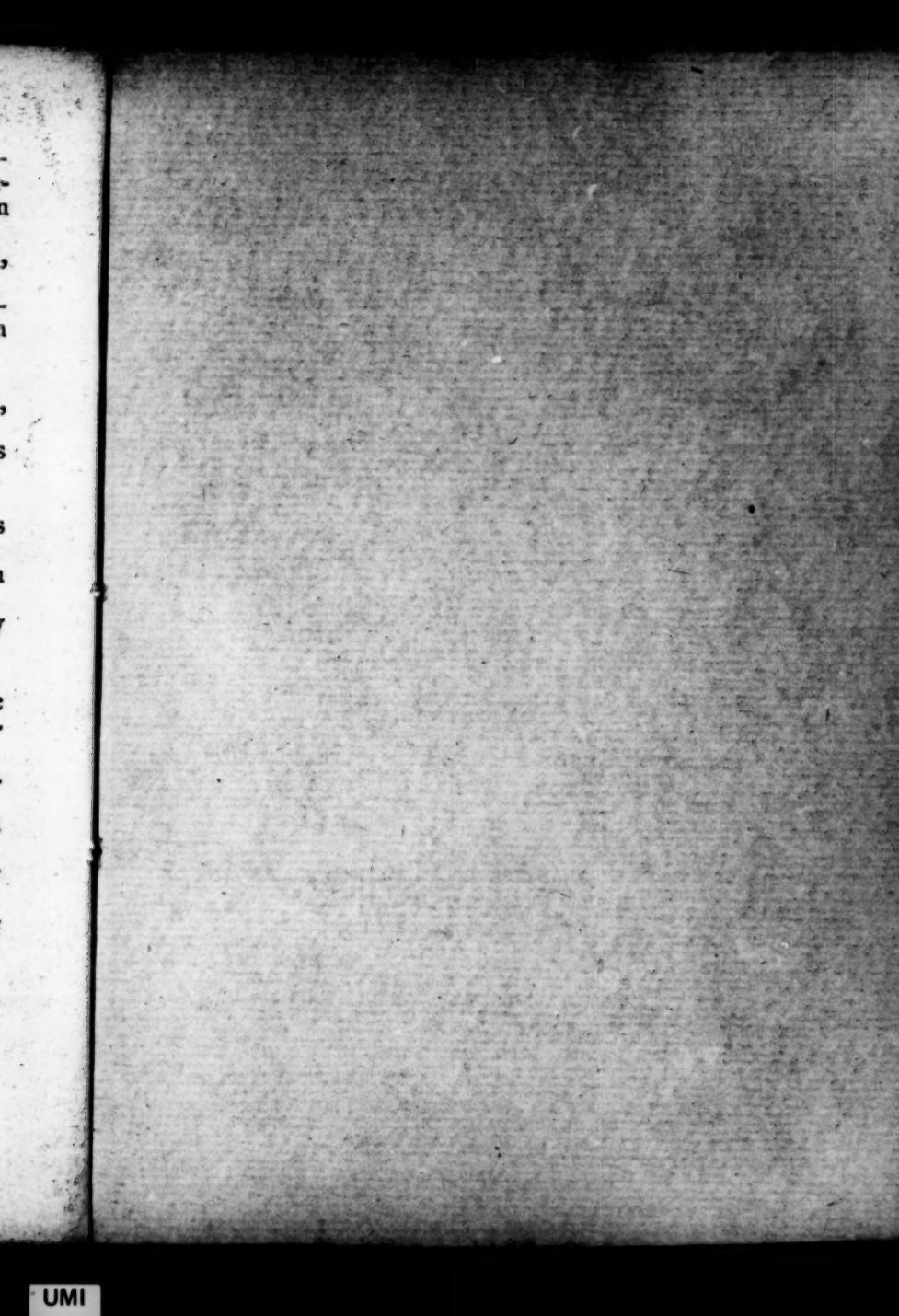
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